



Centre for Democracy & Development
Centre pour la démocratie et le développement

WEST AFRICA

SECURITY TRACKER

MARCH 2025

AUTHORS

Dengiyefa Angalapu

Titilayo Olaniyan

Peter Yohanna

EDITOR

Dr. Lassane Ouedraogo

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The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa) is a nonprofit organisation committed to advancing democracy, security, and development in West Africa through research, advocacy, and strategic analysis. This report is a reflection of that mission, providing independent, data-driven insights into security trends in the region.

The West Africa Security Tracker is made possible through rigorous analysis and the use of high-quality data. We acknowledge the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) for supplying the foundational data that informs this report.

CDD-West Africa upholds the values of quality, independence, and impact in its research. The unwavering support of its leadership ensures that work on West Africa's security landscape remains rigorous, timely, and actionable.

WITH SPECIAL THANKS

Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)



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Executive Summary

Violence surged across West Africa in March 2025, with 899 recorded incidents and 1,944 fatalities, a 15.8% increase in deaths from February. This marks a worrying reversal from earlier declines and underscores the region's worsening security crisis. Nigeria remained the epicentre, accounting for 40% of all regional deaths, driven by insurgent attacks, military airstrikes, and intercommunal clashes. Burkina Faso followed with 697 deaths, amid intensified jihadist violence and troubling reports of civilian casualties caused by state forces. Mali recorded 286 deaths, with violence spreading into southern areas once considered stable.

Niger experienced fewer but deadlier attacks, including a mosque massacre and suicide bombings. Even relatively stable countries like Ghana, Benin, and Liberia saw rising communal violence and vigilante killings. While no fatalities were recorded in Guinea, Mauritania, Togo, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Cape Verde, civic unrest points to growing discontent. State forces were responsible for 44% of all deaths, followed by jihadist groups and local militias, reflecting the increasingly complex and fragmented nature of the conflict. Despite some isolated military successes, efforts to address violence remain disjointed. Without urgent, coordinated strategies that include peacebuilding, governance reform, and economic development, West Africa risks sliding further into a prolonged and normalised state of insecurity.

General Overview

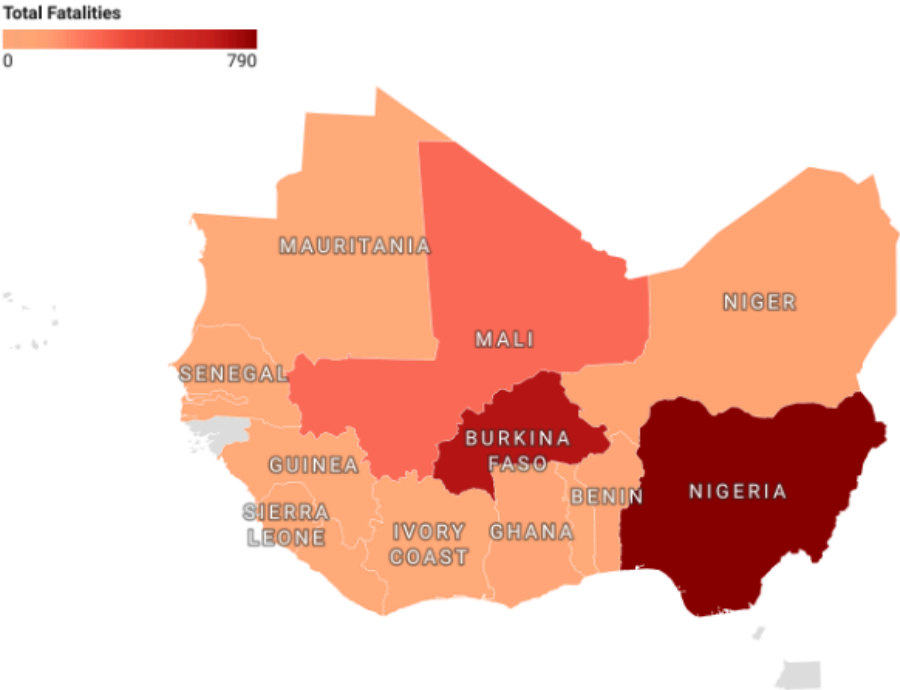
West Africa continues to face widespread insecurity, with violence deeply affecting governance, economic activity, and everyday life across the region. In March 2025, the security situation deteriorated further, according to data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) project.^[1] A total of 899 security incidents were recorded, a 6.4% increase from February's 845 incidents. Fatalities surged even more sharply, rising from 1,678 in February to 1,944 in March, a 15.8% spike. This upward trend reverses the modest decline seen earlier in the year and raises concerns of a sustained escalation.

The increase in both frequency and lethality of incidents underscores the ability of non-state armed groups to continue mounting deadly attacks despite ongoing military operations. Conflict hotspots such as the Sahel, the Lake Chad Basin, and parts of coastal West Africa remain particularly vulnerable, with civilians often caught in the crossfire or deliberately targeted.

While some countries remain relatively stable, others are seeing a worrying spread of violence into new areas. The persistent insecurity highlights growing pressure on national governments and regional bodies to shift from reactive, militarised responses toward preventive and coordinated strategies. Without such efforts, insecurity could continue to worsen, reaching areas that had previously remained stable and undermining fragile gains in peace and development.

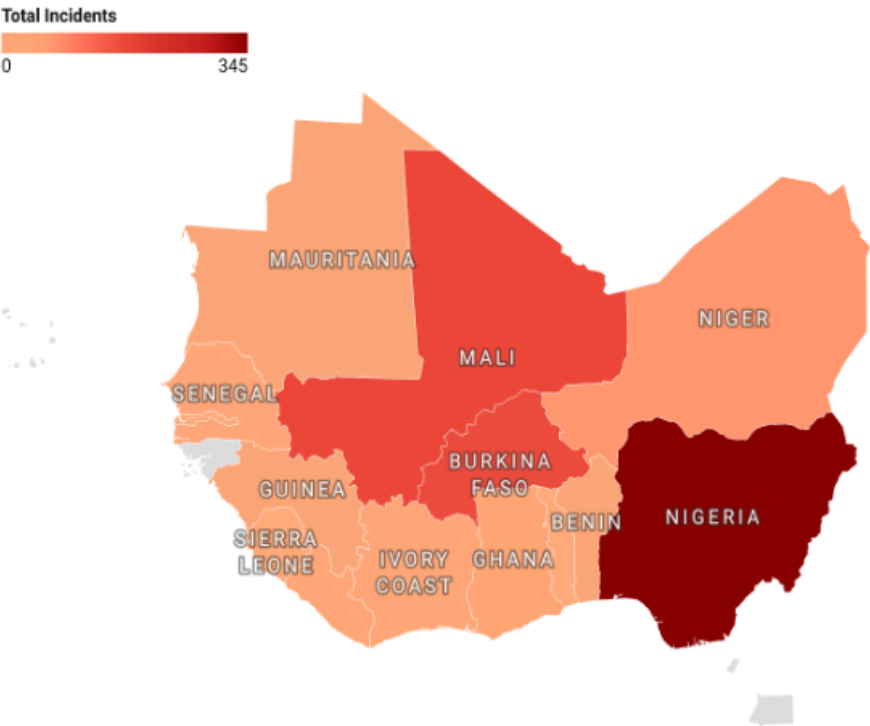
[1]ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

Figure 1: Conflict Fatalities Across West Africa-March 2025



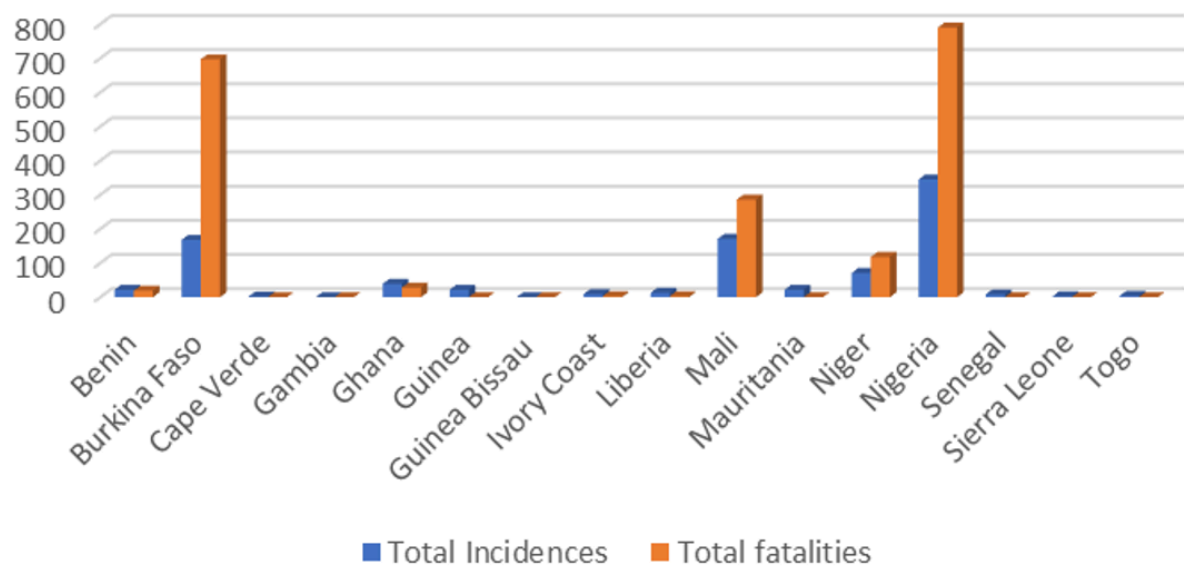
Source: ACLED • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 2: Conflict Incidents Across West Africa-March 2025



Source: ACLED • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 3: Conflict Incidents and Fatalities Across West Africa- March 2025



Source: ACLED, March 2025

High Impact Countries

Nigeria

Nigeria remained the most impacted country in West Africa in March 2025, with a sharp rise in fatalities compared to the previous month. The country recorded 345 incidents and 790 deaths, marking a 4.86% increase in violent events and a 42.60% surge in fatalities relative to February, when 329 incidents resulted in 554 deaths.^[2] This escalation underscores the intensifying nature of Nigeria's security crisis and reflects a significant rise in the lethality of both state-led counterinsurgency operations and non-state violence.

A significant proportion of March's fatalities were concentrated in the North West, North Central, and North East regions,^[3] where armed clashes, insurgent raids, and intercommunal violence converged. Zamfara State alone accounted for 213 deaths, driven by repeated armed clashes between state forces and militia groups. These included joint operations involving the Nigerian military, police, and community protection units targeting militia hideouts in Tsafe and Anka LGAs. While these operations resulted in substantial militant casualties, they also revealed persistent resistance from local armed groups, some of whom retaliated with ambushes and reprisal attacks.^[4]

In Borno State, at least 194 fatalities were recorded from 32 separate incidents, most of which stemmed from sustained air and drone strikes targeting Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram (JAS) camps.^[5] The Nigerian Air Force executed a string of precision airstrikes in Gwoza, Damboa, Marte, and Abadam LGAs, resulting in dozens of militant deaths and the destruction of critical logistical infrastructure, including gun trucks and hideouts. These operations demonstrate the state's continued reliance on airpower as a tactical tool, but also reflect the entrenched presence of extremist groups in the North East.

Communal and retaliatory violence continued to escalate in the North Central zone. In Benue State, 57 people were killed in attacks attributed to armed pastoralists, particularly in Otukpo and Buruku LGAs. These incidents highlight the recurring tensions between farming communities and herder groups, further compounded by the state's limited capacity to pre-empt or respond to such threats.

^[2] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/data/>

^[3] International Crisis Group: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/288-violence-nigerias-north-west-rolling-back-mayhem>

^[4] Daily Trust: <https://dailytrust.com/bandits-kill-10-community-guards-vigilantes-in-zamfara/>

^[5] International Crisis Group: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/b196-jas-vs-iswap-war-boko-haram-splinters>

Plateau State also witnessed significant bloodshed, with at least 25 civilians killed, including during a wake in Ruwi village (Bokkos LGA), where militia fighters opened fire on mourners.^[6]

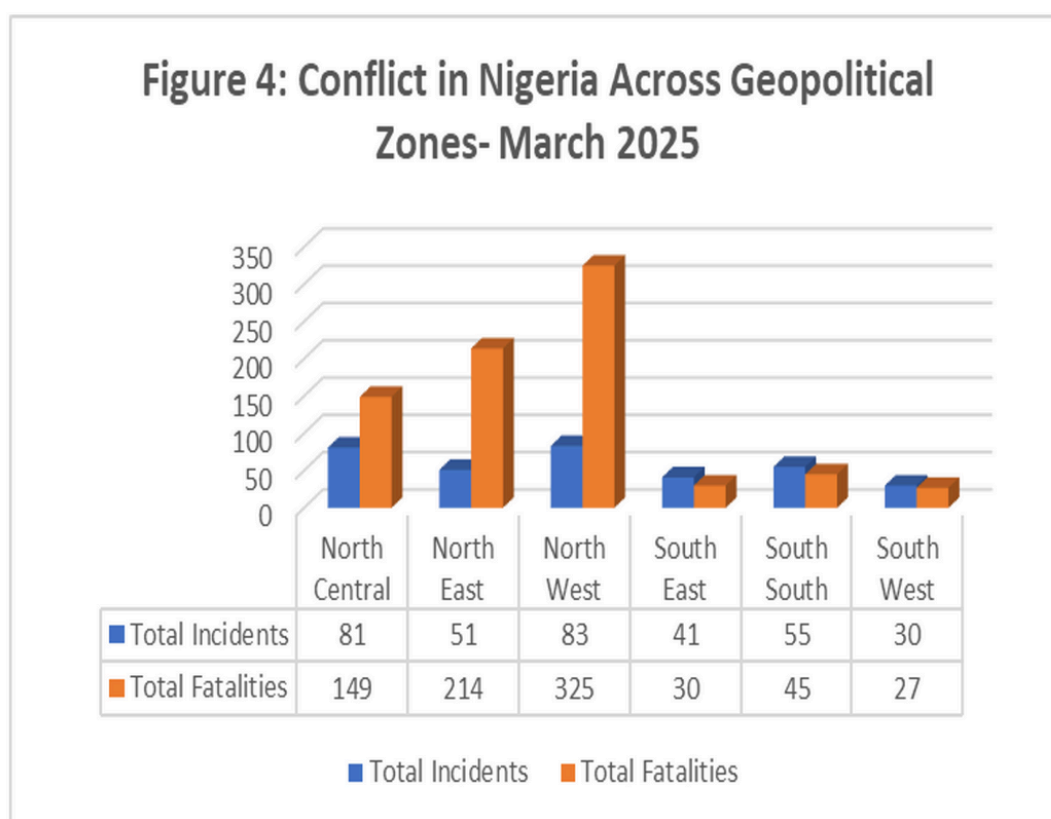
Niger State recorded 29 deaths linked to clashes between government forces and criminal networks, as well as IED-related threats in areas like Shiroro and Lapai. In Ondo State, suspected Fulani pastoralists attacked farming villages in Akure North, killing at least 19 people in coordinated assaults that appeared unprovoked.^[7] These attacks further demonstrate how even southwestern states, typically perceived as more stable, are not insulated from the ripple effects of intercommunal conflict.

March also featured disturbing instances of extrajudicial violence and mob retaliation. On 27 March, a mob lynched and burned 16 travellers in Uromi (Edo State), accusing them of being kidnappers after weapons were found in their vehicle. The victims were later confirmed to be hunters returning home from a seasonal expedition. This incident illustrates a growing societal tendency toward vigilante justice, reflective of both deep-seated public distrust in formal institutions and the increasing normalisation of collective violence.

Despite notable operational gains by the military, such as the neutralisation of key militia leaders and the dismantling of several insurgent bases, the sharp rise in fatalities reveals the escalating scale and intensity of Nigeria's multifaceted conflict landscape. The significant increase in the number of deaths from February 2025 to March 2025 suggests that while security operations are ongoing, they remain insufficient to address the root causes of instability, including the proliferation of armed groups, weak state presence in rural areas, and the widening trust deficit between communities and the government.

^[6] Genocide Watch: <https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/csi-condemns-holy-week-massacre-of-christians-in-nigeria>

^[7] PunchNews: <https://punchng.com/herders-attacks-tension-in-ondo-communities-as-amotekun-plans-counter-operations/>



Source: ACLED, March 2025

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso experienced a significant escalation in violence during March 2025, recording 168 incidents and 697 fatalities. This marks a 21.74% increase in incidents and a 32.27% rise in fatalities compared to February 2025, which saw 138 incidents and 527 deaths. The data reflects a deepening security crisis, driven by large-scale insurgent attacks, retaliatory state operations, and serious allegations of mass civilian killings.

The month began with a series of deadly attacks. On 5 March, JNIM militants launched an assault in Salembaore (Koulpelogo Province), resulting in nine deaths, including soldiers, Volunteer Defence Forces (VDP), and civilians.^[8] The group later claimed responsibility and displayed captured weapons. A day later, on 6 March, VDP and army forces reportedly killed 28 civilians in Notou (Yagha Province), raising early concerns about state-led reprisals.

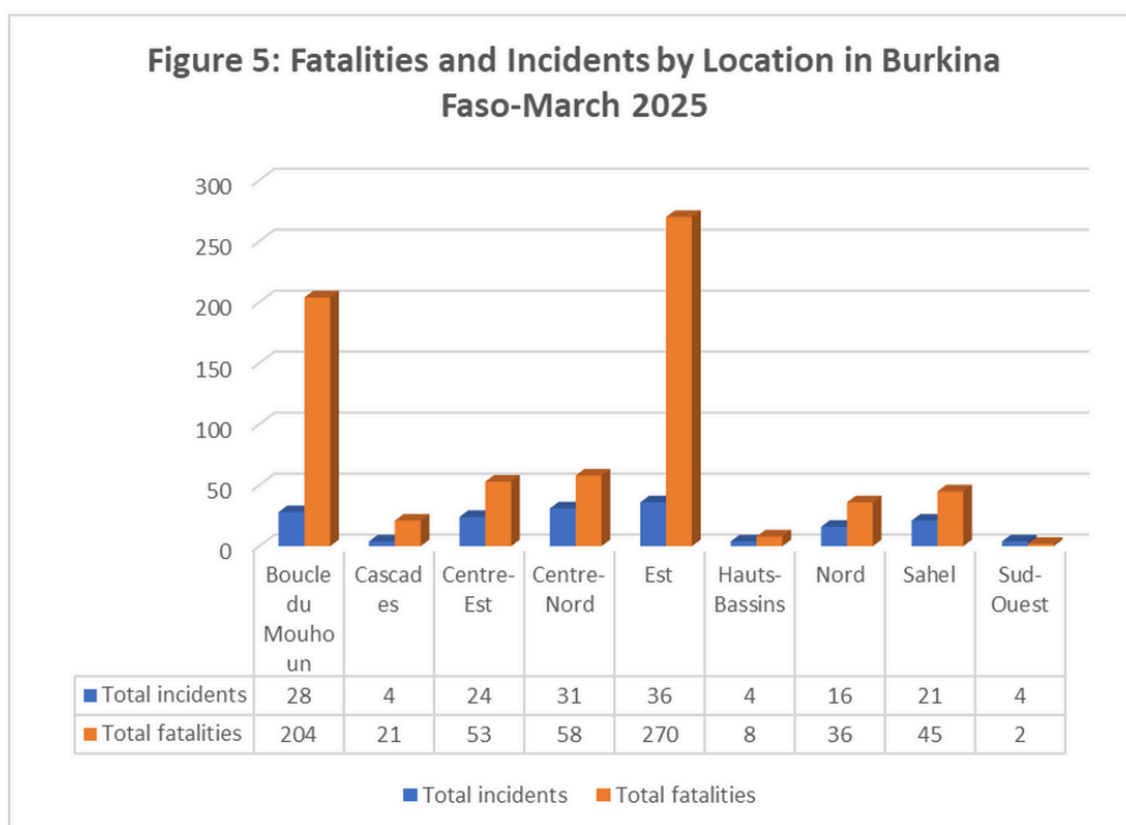
[8] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

On 9 March, special forces from Rapid Intervention Battalion 10 (BIR 10) repelled an assault by militants in Solenzo (Banwa Province), killing 12 attackers and seizing weapons and money. However, the following day, 10 March, the most devastating incident of the month occurred when the Burkinabe military and VDP launched a major counter-offensive in Solenzo following a JNIM attack. While the operation was hailed by officials for killing 100 militants and freeing hundreds of hostages, it was marred by credible allegations of extrajudicial killings. Reports from Human Rights Watch and Fulani survivors indicated that at least 58 civilians, including women and children, were killed by security forces in Mahouana and Bena villages.

On 11 March, militants struck a joint military-VDP camp in Bogande (Gnagna Province), killing 14 personnel. Two days later, on 13 March, JNIM continued its offensive operations: 20 VDP were killed in Sakedougou (Comoe Province), while clashes in Thiou (Yatenga Province) left 11 dead and allowed the group to claim captured mortars and rifles. In Sanmatenga Province that same day, a coordinated ambush using three IEDs near Barsalogho killed 17 VDP. State violence escalated again on 19 March, when government forces were implicated in the mass killing of approximately 105 civilians across four villages in Komandjari Province Tiargou, Kalimama, Toubmenga, and Nyifoagma. These killings, reportedly targeting Fulani and Gourmatche communities, followed militant incursions in the area and further underscored the ethnic dimensions of the conflict.

Later in the month, on 28 March, JNIM launched a major assault on a military base in Diapaga (Tapoa Province). Employing drones to drop improvised explosive devices, the militants overran the camp, killing 74 individuals, comprising 37 soldiers, 23 VDP, and four civilians. The attackers looted weapons, burned infrastructure, including a cotton company and civil prison, and publicised the assault through released videos and images, demonstrating their growing tactical and media capabilities. Throughout March, JNIM maintained a high operational tempo, targeting military outposts and patrols across several provinces. The pattern of attacks reveals significant developments: the group's increasing reliance on drone warfare, repeated seizure of military installations, and persistent targeting of rural civilians caught between militant aggression and heavy-handed state reprisals.

Despite some tactical gains by the Burkinabe state, including the liberation of hostages and seizure of militant supplies, the month's data confirms that the structural dynamics of the conflict are intensifying. Allegations of war crimes, growing civilian casualties, and deepening communal fault lines suggest that Burkina Faso's conflict is becoming more entrenched and complex.



Source: ACLED, March 2025

Mali

Mali recorded 171 incidents that led to 286 fatalities in March 2025, representing a 3.01% increase in incidents and a 27.41% decrease in fatalities compared to February 2025, which recorded 166 incidents and 394 fatalities. However, with the decline in overall deaths, the spatial patterns of violence and the repeated targeting of both civilians and armed actors indicate continued volatility, with notable shifts in tactics and geographic spread.

The Mopti and Tombouctou regions, which were the most affected in February, again recorded the highest number of killings in March. In Mopti, a major ambush by JNIM on 27 March targeted a joint FAMa and Dozo patrol between Diafarabe and Nouh-Bozo (Djenne), resulting in 41 fatalities.^[9] Other significant attacks occurred in Nouh-Bozo, Diengo, Djongue-Bambara, Koroguir, and Sadia, where JNIM militants targeted Dozo and Dan Na Ambassagou militia members. These attacks, combined with airstrikes, militia reprisals, and inter-group fighting, sustained Mopti's status as the most lethal region of the month.

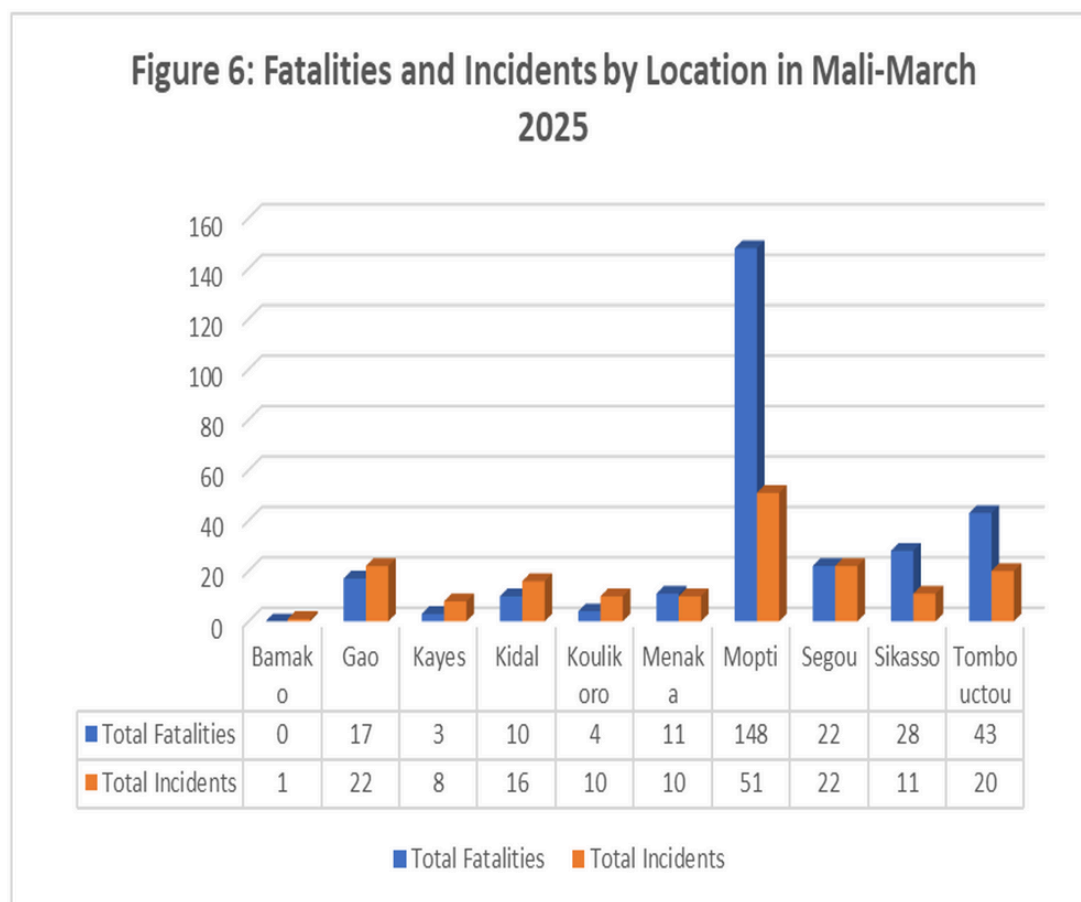
[9] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

In Tombouctou, state-led airstrikes were the dominant source of fatalities. On 18 March, the Malian Air Force struck a commercial site in Chembou (Gourma-Rharous), killing 13 civilians from the Songhai and Bellah communities. On 19 March, airstrikes reportedly targeting JNIM logistics in Sanfatou hit civilians unloading fuel drums, with 12 killed according to local accounts. On 16 March, drone and helicopter strikes in Ej Jdour (Goundam) were claimed by the army to have targeted an armed group's transitional camp, but the Azawad Liberation Front (FLA) stated that 18 civilians were killed. These incidents continued a trend observed in February, where air and drone strikes contributed significantly to civilian fatalities in Tombouctou.

Outside of the traditional conflict zones in the centre and north, Sikasso region, which had seen limited activity in February, recorded a noticeable increase in violence in March. On 27 March, FAMa operations in Kalana, Satiguila, Yorobougoula, and Koloni resulted in the deaths of 19 Fulani civilians accused of collaborating with armed groups. On 18 March, volunteer fighters attacked the village of Kian (Yorosso), killing five civilians and seizing livestock. These incidents mark a growing expansion of military operations into the southern regions, suggesting a southward spread of the conflict dynamic.

Civilian targeting by both state forces and insurgents was widespread. On 26 March, a FAMa and Wagner patrol in Diabi (Mopti) killed six civilians and arrested two others. On 1 March, JNIM militants ambushed militia members on the outskirts of Sadia and Kani Bonzo (Bankass), killing seven and abducting several young men, three of whom were later found dead. On 14 March, a combined drone and helicopter operation near Pimpe (Tenenkou, Mopti) destroyed vehicles, motorcycles, and fuel depots, killing at least ten militants according to FAMa, though local reports indicated possible civilian casualties.

In multiple locations, JNIM sustained a steady campaign of attacks on Dan Na Ambassagou and Dozo militias, often accompanied by the looting of livestock, weapons, and motorcycles. These patterns mirrored those observed in February, though the frequency of large-scale ambushes increased. State-aligned forces, including Wagner elements, were also active in multiple regions, with several reported cases of extrajudicial killings, ethnic profiling, and destruction of civilian property.



Source: ACLED, March 2025

Niger Republic

Niger recorded 71 incidents and 118 fatalities in March 2025, reflecting a 10.94% decrease in incidents but a 22.92% increase in fatalities compared to February, which saw 79 incidents and 96 deaths. While the overall number of attacks declined slightly, the month was marked by several high-casualty events, particularly in the Tillaberi and Diffa regions, reinforcing the country's sustained exposure to both mass civilian killings and battlefield confrontations between armed groups and the military.

Between 2 and 5 March, joint military forces from Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso clashed with Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) fighters in Taratako (Tera, Tillaberi). The operation led to the seizure of dozens of weapons and vehicles used for illicit gold mining. Fatalities from the confrontation were conservatively coded as three, with indications of higher militant losses.

On 15 March, the Nigerien army, supported by the Burkinabè air force, launched a joint air-ground operation targeting an ISSP-controlled artisanal mining site in Kiral (Bankilare, Tillabéri). The military claimed that at least 45 militants were neutralised, though fatalities were conservatively coded as 10 militants and 9 soldiers based on verified reporting. Approximately 40 suspected militants were arrested, and military forces seized assault rifles, RPGs, and over a dozen motorcycles. This incident followed a pattern observed in previous months, in which joint military actions targeted illicit mining infrastructure believed to fund violent extremist groups. That same day, in a separate confrontation in Tera (Tillabéri), eight Nigerien soldiers were killed during clashes with armed fighters.

On 16 March, in the Diffa region, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) launched a vehicle-borne suicide attack against a Nigerien army position in Chetima Wangou, breaching defensive lines and initiating a heavy firefight.^[10] The army later conducted sweep operations that reportedly resulted in dozens of militant deaths and the destruction of equipment. While ISWAP claimed a higher toll, fatalities were coded as 15,^[11] including the suicide attacker, four soldiers, and several unidentified militants. The tactics used, combining suicide bombing with mass infiltration, reflect an increasingly complex threat landscape along the Lake Chad Basin.

On 19 March, Nigerien forces clashed with JNIM (Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin) militants 90 kilometres west of Arlit (Agadez). The army reported killing three militants and arresting three others, in addition to seizing weapons and a vehicle. Authorities stated that the militants were involved in an earlier February attack on military positions in I-n-Abanghaghiti. This operation was one of the few reported engagements in the Agadez region, which remained relatively quiet compared to Tillabéri and Diffa.

On 21 March, ISSP fighters raided the village of Kokorou (Tera, Tillabéri) and killed an unspecified number of civilians, coded as three fatalities. Later that same day, ISSP militants launched the deadliest attack of the month in the village of Fambita (Tera, Tillabéri) during Friday prayers. The militants reportedly encircled the mosque and opened fire on worshippers, killing at least 44 civilians and injuring 13 others.^[12] Following the massacre, they burned down the local market and several houses. The scale and symbolic nature of the attack prompted the government to declare 72 hours of national mourning, reflecting the broader shock triggered by one of the deadliest single-day events recorded in Niger in recent months.

[10] Zagazola: <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/iswap-attack-in-niger-soldier-killed-several-civilians-kidnapped-in-diffa-region>

[11] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

[12] Nigerian Tribune: <https://tribuneonline.ng.com/islamist-militants-kill-44-civilians-in-niger-republic/>

On 24 March, an armed group, likely JNIM, attacked Makalondi (Torodi, Tillaberi), killing several civilians and destroying property. Fatalities were coded as three. On 26 March, militants on motorcycles (likely ISSP) killed three civilians collecting dry straw near Kodogoria (Tillaberi).

March confirmed the continued centrality of Tillaberi as the hotspot of insecurity in Niger, with a high density of both armed group activity and state counter-operations. While Diffa experienced fewer incidents overall, it remained strategically significant due to the persistent presence of ISWAP and the scale of the Chetima Wangou attack. Agadez and Torodi registered lower levels of violence but remained sites of targeted military engagements and cross-border militant movement. The month saw a transition from widespread lower-casualty attacks to fewer but deadlier incidents, particularly those involving civilian populations

Spillover and Emerging Conflict Zones

Ghana

Ghana recorded 39 incidents and 28 fatalities in March 2025, representing a 62.5% increase in incidents and a 75% rise in fatalities compared to February, which saw 24 incidents and 16 deaths. This escalation reflects both a growing frequency of violent disputes and a broader spread of insecurity across multiple regions, suggesting deeper systemic tensions related to land conflicts, resource competition, state violence, and community-based justice.

The Upper East region continued to exhibit high levels of insecurity, with Binduri and Bawku emerging as hotspots. On 23 March, unidentified armed men opened fire at a drinking spot in Binduri, killing three civilians and injuring three others. Earlier in the month, on 8 March, another group of armed assailants stormed a residence in the same town, killing three people under unclear circumstances.^[13] On 17 March, gunmen also attacked a marketplace in Bawku, killing two civilians, in an event believed to be tied to ongoing chieftaincy-related tensions in the area.^[14] A separate incident in Gambaga (North East Region) on 12 March involved the shooting of two students, one fatally, in what was similarly suspected to be linked to the Bawku chieftaincy dispute between Kusasi and Mamprusi factions. These events reflect the inter-communal spillover of the Bawku conflict into surrounding regions and the continued use of armed violence to settle socio-political rivalries.

On 17 March, the Jatodo and Namani clans clashed over farmland rights in Kunbuni (Nanumba South, Northern Region), leading to the deaths of four people and the displacement of members of the Jatodo clan. This event is part of a broader pattern of land and chieftaincy-related disputes in northern Ghana, where ethnic loyalties and competing claims over natural resources frequently escalate into violence.

In the Western North Region, an intra-criminal dispute over timber territory turned deadly on 11 March, when two rival groups of illegal loggers clashed with machetes and firearms in Sefwi Agyemandiem (Juabeso).^[15] The confrontation led to the deaths of five individuals, highlighting the growing risks of unregulated natural resource exploitation and the absence of effective state oversight in forested border areas.

Security force abuses also featured prominently. On 28 March, seven military officers killed two civilians in Kumasi (Ashanti Region) following allegations of mobile phone theft. The civilians were reportedly assaulted in retaliation for a theft incident the previous day.

[13] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

[14] BusinessGhana: <https://www.businessghana.com/site/news/General/324710/Soldier-shot-dead-in-Bawku>

[15] MyJoyOnline: <https://www.myjoyonline.com/5-dead-as-two-groups-of-illegal-timber-loggers-clash-in-sefwi-agyemadiem/>

Earlier, on 26 March, a mob in Adum (also in Kumasi) lynched a man accused of theft after he was caught with two suspected accomplices who managed to flee. These two incidents reflect a broader trend of urban insecurity, where vigilante justice and extra-legal violence are increasingly used to enforce perceived justice amid weak policing and delayed legal processes.

On 7 March, a man accused of stealing 18 sheep was beaten to death after being handed over to immigration officers at a checkpoint in Naro (Nadowli-Kaleo, Upper West Region). Allegations that the officers were directly responsible for the killing raise further concerns about the use of force by security personnel and the lack of safeguards for detainees. Meanwhile, on 17 March, an unidentified armed group killed a military officer in Bawku. Although the motive was unclear, it occurred within the broader context of deteriorating security conditions in the region, shaped by the longstanding chieftaincy rivalry.

The incidents in March 2025 illustrate how communal disputes, state violence, and mob retaliation continue to form the bulk of Ghana's emerging security profile. The Upper East, North East, Northern, Western North, Ashanti, and Upper West regions were the most affected, with fatalities linked to both structured inter-group violence and unstructured criminal or vigilante responses.

Benin Republic

Benin recorded 22 incidents and 19 fatalities in March 2025, representing a 57.1% increase in incidents and a 72.7% rise in fatalities compared to February, which recorded 14 incidents and 11 deaths. The spike reflects heightened insecurity in the northern regions, especially along the borders with Burkina Faso and Niger, where militant activity, communal tensions, and military responses converge.

Throughout March, northern Benin witnessed a series of violent incidents reflecting the convergence of extremist threats, state militarisation, and growing local insecurity. On 3 March, a man was abducted and killed in Kerou (Atacora), followed by the murder of a woman in Cobli on 6 March, and the killing of three herders near Brignamaro (Kerou) on 7 March, indicating rising threats to pastoralist and rural communities.^[16] On 11 March, the military killed two suspected JNIM militants in Karimama (Alibori), part of expanding operations in volatile cross-border zones.

This was followed by the killing of two herders on 12 March in Segbana (Alibori), and the 13 March killing of a trader in Bouka (Kalale, Borgou) by suspected Nigerian mercenaries, reportedly over a business dispute, pointing to the involvement of unregulated armed actors in localised tensions.

[16] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

The second half of March saw increased state use of force: on 20 March, two civilians were killed in Kofounou (Karimama), and on 21 March, three others were shot in Banikoara for allegedly aiding militants. These actions underscore the government's intensified security response, though concerns persist over civilian targeting and rules of engagement.

On 30 March, a clash in Boke (Bembereke, Borgou) between pastoralist youth and local residents over inter-community relationships left one dead and three injured, highlighting how social tensions are increasingly turning violent. Together, these incidents suggest a conflict environment shaped by cross-border militancy, state-civilian distrust, and the erosion of local conflict resolution mechanisms.

Liberia

Liberia recorded 13 incidents and 3 fatalities in March 2025, marking a 62.5% increase in incidents from February (8 incidents, 3 fatalities), though the death toll remained unchanged. The sharp rise in protest-related incidents, largely non-lethal, points to mounting socio-political grievances across rural and urban communities, particularly around governance, land disputes, and institutional accountability.

The month began with identity and faith-based tensions: on 2 March, members of a breakaway congregation clashed with police at the 72nd Methodist Church in Paynesville during a protest over same-sex marriage and perceived deviations from traditional doctrine. Police used tear gas, and several arrests were made, though no fatalities occurred. On 3 March, motorcyclists in Monrovia protested against alleged police harassment and movement restrictions, demanding either safe passage or compensation.

Belief-based violence persisted mid-month. On 17 March, a mob in Middle Town (Maryland County) killed a man accused of promoting witchcraft. Four suspects were arrested, showing some legal response. The most fatal incident occurred the following day, 18 March, in River Gee County, where two civilians died in a land dispute between residents of Glaro and Katiabo. The clash, rooted in contested territorial claims, prompted police and military deployment, highlighting persistent tension between customary and statutory land governance systems.

March also saw a wave of protests across different sectors. On 18 March, members of the Student Unification Party (SUP) clashed with police in Monrovia outside the Liberia Football Association (LFA) headquarters, demanding verification of the LFA President's citizenship. Several staff were injured and five protesters arrested.

On 25 March, hundreds of students demonstrated in Monrovia over unpaid teacher salaries, leading to clashes with police, who used tear gas; several students were injured or detained.^[17] On 28 March, residents of Vambo and surrounding towns protested against C&C Logging Company over an exclusionary contract and alleged mismanagement of \$6,000. Protesters blocked roads and demanded contract renegotiation.

Throughout the month, other demonstrations reflected economic and corporate accountability concerns. In Kpayah Town (Bong County), residents blocked roads demanding that Da Tang Gold Mining Company sign a Memorandum of Understanding and provide compensation for road use. In March, conflicts were concentrated in Monrovia, Bong, Grand Bassa, and River Gee counties, with land governance, education, contract transparency, and cultural identity driving public discontent. These events also reflect the state's uneven capacity to manage both longstanding tensions and emerging socio-economic frustrations.

Ivory Coast

Ivory Coast recorded 9 incidents and 3 fatalities in March 2025, reflecting no change in fatalities but a 12.5% increase in incidents compared to February, which saw 8 incidents and 3 deaths. The month was marked by a combination of violent communal clashes in rural mining zones and a noticeable uptick in protests in urban areas over governance, service delivery, and traditional authority disputes.

On 1 March, nearly a thousand women marched in Abobo to denounce the rise in gender-based violence. The following day, on 2 March, thousands of trade unionists mobilised in Grand-Bassam (Sud-Comoe) to call for the cancellation of Africa's sovereign debts, framing the protest within a broader pan-African solidarity campaign. On 4 March, traders in Yopougon protested against recurrent evictions by city authorities, demanding more transparency and protection of small business owners. This was followed by a protest on 8 March, when residents of Angre opposed the conversion of a public green space into a real estate project. On 9 March, members of a women's cooperative in Adjame demanded refunds over a stalled market construction project.

The deadliest event of the month occurred on 15 March in Kiendi (Gontougo, Zanzan),^[18] where a clash between village youth guards and illegal gold miners resulted in three deaths. The confrontation began when youths guarding community lands surprised a group of miners during overnight operations, leading to an exchange of gunfire.

[17] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

[18] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

Police were deployed to the area, and local sources noted that tensions had been building for weeks due to the expansion of illicit mining activities a growing trend across Zanzan and other resource-rich areas in the northeast. On 20 March, Atchan community members in Abobo protested the appointment of a new village chief by state authorities, accusing the prefectural office of overriding customary selection processes and violating local traditions.

Later in the month, on 28 March, an unidentified group of six individuals looted a cattle farm in Assikoun (Me, Lagunes), tying up the herder, his family, and a bystander before stealing 11 oxen. Police were deployed, but no arrests were reported at the time. On 31 March, youths from the Akye and Malinke communities clashed in Akoupe (Me, Lagunes) following a dispute in a recreational zone. The confrontation, involving projectiles and blunt weapons, caused property damage and prompted police intervention using tear gas. The number of casualties remained unconfirmed.

The events of March reaffirmed a pattern of low-scale, dispersed incidents across Ivory Coast, blending communal frictions, criminality, and citizen-led protests. While the overall fatality rate remained low, the variety and frequency of protests especially in Abidjan point to growing dissatisfaction with local governance and resource distribution, alongside persistent tensions in rural areas linked to land use and extractive activities.

Relatively Peaceful

Cape Verde

Cape Verde recorded two protest-related incidents and no fatalities in March 2025, reflecting a relatively calm security environment despite growing socio-economic and political expressions. On 17 March, drivers employed by Sol Atlantico, the main public transport company in Praia, staged a peaceful protest outside the company's headquarters. Backed by the Independent and Democratic Union of Cape Verdean Workers (SIACSA), the demonstrators demanded salary adjustments and improved working conditions, citing inflation and rising living costs. The protest highlighted underlying tensions between labour unions and private service providers in the capital.

Earlier in the month, on 9 March, a group of Guinea-Bissau nationals residing in Cape Verde organised a march in Praia to denounce political developments in their home country. The demonstrators called for the organisation of general elections within 90 days of the end of President Umaro Sissoco Embaló's mandate, aligning their demands with constitutional timelines. While both protests were peaceful and recorded no incidents of violence or arrests, they reflect the growing use of Cape Verdean civic space by both domestic and diaspora communities to voice political and economic concerns.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone recorded 3 incidents and no fatalities in March 2025. On 27 March, SLPP members from Tonkolili District protested at the party headquarters in Freetown over alleged irregularities in constituency executive appointments, calling for a rerun of local elections. On 18 March, youth demonstrators gathered around Circular Road and Fort Street in Freetown following the suspicious death of two children, prompting a police response involving tear gas and warning shots. No casualties were confirmed. On 5 March, employees of the Koidu Limited Mining Company protested in Kono, demanding improved labour conditions and union recognition.^[19] The demonstration remained peaceful and received support from public figures, including the First Lady.

While the overall security environment remains calm, the protests signal a gradual build-up of civic pressure across political, social, and economic spheres.

[19]Reuters:<https://www.reuters.com/business/world-at-work/sierra-leones-largest-diamond-miner-shuts-down-laying-off-more-than-1000-workers-2025-05-12/#:~:text=Koidu%20has%20accused%20Sierra%20Leone's,done%20to%20resolve%20the%20impasse.%22>

The absence of fatalities masks the potential volatility of unresolved grievances, particularly around public accountability, justice, and labour rights. The incidents reflect a tense but still manageable civic space, underscoring the need for responsive governance to address underlying concerns before they escalate.

Togo

Togo recorded 4 incidents and no fatalities in March 2025. On 23 March, hundreds to thousands of demonstrators gathered in Golfe 4 (Lomé) to protest the 2024 constitutional reform that abolished direct presidential elections in favour of a parliamentary system. The demonstration featured speeches by leading opposition and civil society figures, including Zeus Ajavon, David Dosseh, Paul Dodji Apevon, and Jean-Pierre Fabre. Protesters called for a return to the 1992 constitution and urged ECOWAS to denounce what they described as a constitutional coup.^[20] On 21 March, a government-led campaign titled “Commitment to the 5th Republic” was launched in defence of the new constitutional arrangement.

On 20 March, 12 political parties and civil society groups^[21] jointly announced a new opposition front in Lomé, demanding a national political transition, the reversal of the constitutional changes, and the organisation of an inclusive national dialogue. On 15 March, expropriated landowners protested in Djağblé (Zio, Maritime), calling for compensation after eight years without redress from a rural development project. On 6 March, the National Assembly extended the state of emergency in Savanes region for another year, citing the continued threat of militant activity, with the announcement coded to Dapaong (Tone).

Though no fatalities were reported, the month revealed rising political tensions over the restructuring of the state, which opposition leaders argue centralises power and weakens electoral accountability. The mass mobilisation in Lomé, coupled with the formalisation of a unified opposition front, signals a reawakening of organised dissent in a context where political expression has often been tightly controlled. Meanwhile, the renewed state of emergency in the north highlights continued security concerns, even as they remain geographically contained.

Senegal

Senegal recorded 8 incidents and no fatalities in March 2025. The month highlighted persistent social discontent over land tenure, local governance, public safety, and moral tensions, with protests spanning multiple regions and reflecting growing frustrations toward both public and private actors.

[20] WADR: <https://wadr.org/togo-protesters-rally-against-proposed-constitutional-reforms/>

[21] WADR: <https://wadr.org/political-opposition-in-togo-rejects-new-parliamentary-system/>

On 6 March, a teachers' strike began in Kaffrine (Keur Mboucki, Birkelane, Kaffrine) after a math teacher expelled students for failing to copy a lesson. The incident prompted students to stage a sit-in on 10 March, leading to the teacher's suspension.

On 8 March, youths in the Diola Gui district of Bayakh (Keur Moussa, Thies) attacked and vandalised residences of Nigerian and Ghanaian sex workers following the fatal stabbing of a young man. Protesters demanded the closure of brothels, accusing them of destabilising the area. A dozen individuals were arrested. Around 14 March, residents of Tobor (Tanghori, Bignona, Ziguinchor) blocked access roads to protest the daily dumping of waste just 100 meters from homes and a school. Garbage trucks, escorted by gendarmes, had continued operations despite local outcry. Several arrests were made, and legal proceedings are ongoing. The protest has drawn condemnation from environmental and human rights organisations. On 15 March, a child was killed in a road accident in Keur Diarra Bambara (Ndiaffate, Ndiedieng, Kaolack), prompting residents to block National Road 5 on 16 March, demanding the installation of speed bumps to prevent further tragedies.

Around 18 March, youths and other residents blocked roads with burning tires in Keur Ndiaye Lo (Sangalkam, Rufisque, Dakar), protesting private developers' attempts to seize farmland. Protesters called on the Prime Minister and the President to intervene and protect their land rights. On 26 March, street traders in Saint Louis (Rao, Saint Louis) protested their earlier eviction on 20 February by barricading the road with burning tires and hurling projectiles at municipal workers, injuring some and damaging municipal vehicles. The police's Special Intervention Brigade responded with tear gas and arrested 14 individuals, who were later charged with unlawful assembly, violence, and damage to public property.

Mauritania

Mauritania witnessed 22 protest-related incidents in March 2025, with no fatalities reported. The demonstrations were largely peaceful but reflected growing public frustration with socio-economic conditions and international developments. From 3 March, student protests intensified over scholarship disbursement and deteriorating campus conditions. At least four separate protests were recorded in Nouakchott and El Ayoun, with some met with police violence, especially on 10 March, when female protesters were injured at the University of Nouakchott. Labour grievances dominated the middle of the month. On 11 March, health workers protested delayed incentives at Friendship Hospital, while that same day, a public outcry outside the Nouakchott criminal court demanded justice in a high-profile rape case. Earlier, on 8 March, undocumented migrants clashed with border police in Gogui, Hodh El Gharbi, protesting imminent deportation and alleged mistreatment.^[22]

[22] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

The week of 18–24 March saw protests in solidarity with Palestine surge across Nouakchott and Nouadhibou. Multiple groups of students, religious leaders, and politicians gathered outside mosques, the US embassy, and the National Assembly to condemn Israeli attacks on Gaza and US support. Calls for diplomatic pushback and economic boycotts echoed across these rallies. Domestic concerns re-emerged on 24 March, when kidney failure patients and hospital workers held parallel protests in Nouakchott, demanding access to financial aid and better working conditions. On 30 March, PhD holders staged a sit-in at the National Recruitment Committee, accusing authorities of sidelining them in university employment processes.

Despite the diversity of causes from health and education to international solidarity, the peaceful nature of all protests highlights Mauritaniens' growing preference for civic action as a means of demanding justice, recognition, and reform.

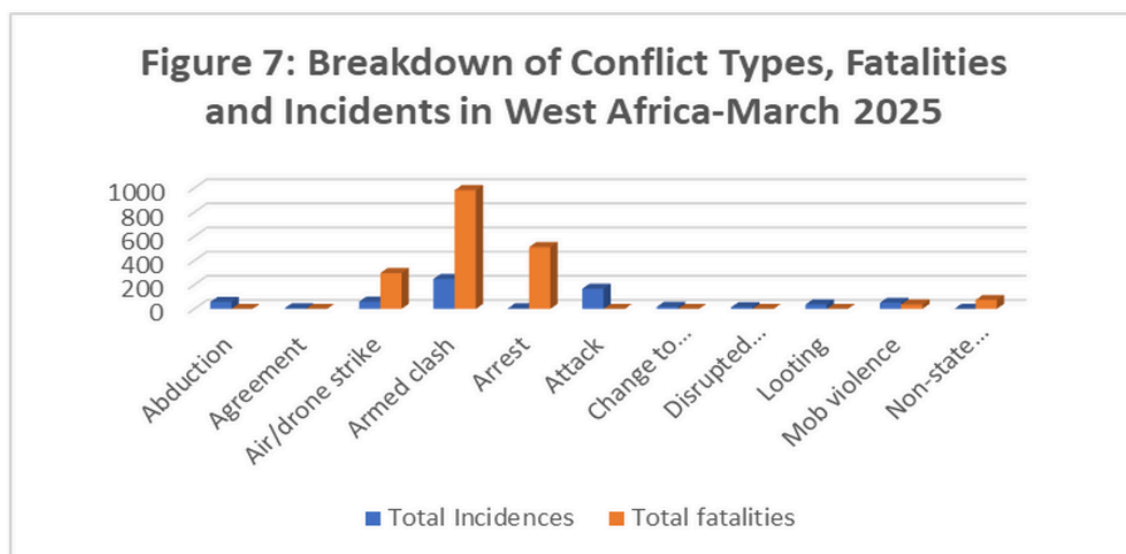
Guinea

Guinea recorded 22 protest-related incidents in March 2025, mostly non-lethal and driven by socio-economic grievances rather than political violence. From 24 March, coordinated protests emerged across Conakry, Kankan, and Siguiri. In Conakry, market women and residents at Cosa-Bantounka opposed a sudden eviction notice, accusing local authorities of favouring private developers. In Siguiri, non-contract teachers decried their exclusion from civil service recruitment. Meanwhile, women in Bissandou (Kankan) called for the release of community leaders arrested over land disputes with Malian herders. On 25 March, tensions rose in Conakry's Yimbaya-Tannerie when residents attempted to torch a minibus following a fatal accident. Security forces dispersed the crowd with warning shots.

Earlier, on 20 March, protests erupted in Kindia after a hit-and-run involving a military vehicle injured a commercial cyclist. Clashes followed as riders blocked roads and resisted law enforcement. That same day in Kankan, a domestic stabbing led to a lynch mob, forcing gendarmes to fire tear gas to rescue the suspect. From 9 to 17 March, civil unrest included anti-poster campaigns in Conakry, labour protests by Chinese company workers in Kankan, and demonstrations by non-contract teachers in Nzerekore. Protesters cited poor working conditions, low pay, and exclusion from official hiring schemes. Farmer-herder violence intensified in Foubadou on 7 March, where earlier protests accusing local officials of bias spiralled into deadly clashes and gendarme intervention, displacing villagers.

Throughout March, demonstrations cut across social sectors from housing and water access to wages and governance. While no fatalities were recorded, the wave of protests underscores a deeper frustration with economic precarity, lack of public services, and rising local tensions.

Patterns of Violence in West Africa



Source: ACLED, March 2025

March's events across West Africa illustrated a troubling mix of entrenched crises and emerging flashpoints. While conflict dynamics varied by country, the cumulative effect was a region under strain, with countries like Burkina Faso and Nigeria experiencing heavy fatalities, and others like Senegal and Ivory Coast facing growing civic unrest. The killings, driven by armed clashes, Airdrone strike bombings, and mass attacks, reflect the worsening security dynamics across a region already burdened by weak governance, insurgencies, and economic despair.^[23] The data collected for this period reveals a pattern conflict is intensifying, spreading across borders, and becoming more lethal, while efforts to stop the bloodshed remain nearly non-existent.

Nigeria alone was responsible for 40.6% of all fatalities in West Africa, with 790 fatalities.^[24] That means more than four in every ten people killed in the region were Nigerian. The violence was as complex as it was crushing: 397 armed clashes, 201 airstrikes, and 158 attacks formed the backbone of the destruction. Together, these accounted for 95% of the country's fatalities, showing just how militarised the conflict has become. These figures suggest not just insurgency activity, but an escalating state response that is increasingly reliant on aerial bombardment and counterinsurgency tactics. Attacks occurred during the month, highlighting the continued presence of both local banditry and more organised armed campaigns, especially in the northeastern and northwestern zones.

[23] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

[24] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

Mob violence was also prominent, with 26 reported cases leading to civilian deaths. Remote explosives were used at least once, while six people were killed in violent demonstrations, and one death was attributed to sexual violence. The absence of peaceful protests, agreements, or disarmament initiatives suggests a complete breakdown in civic engagement and dialogue.

Burkina Faso recorded the second-highest number of fatalities, with 697 people killed during the same month, representing 35.8% of the regional total.^[25] The nature of violence here, while similar in intensity, reveals an even more terrifying trend: the systematic loss of state control. Of the 168 total incidents recorded, 74 involved non-state actors overtaking territory, making Burkina Faso the only country in the region where territorial control visibly shifted hands during the month. This alone is a red flag of growing insurgent dominance. The country also reported 378 armed clashes and 201 attacks. There were 30 air or drone strikes, likely a reflection of government or international military responses to terrorist threats in the Sahel region. The lack of community-led resistance or state outreach paints a picture of isolated, exposed populations left entirely to the will of armed factions and the chaos they bring.

Mali, which has remained in the crosshairs of instability since the early 2010s, saw 286 fatalities in March, representing 14.7%. The government and its external partners deployed 66 airstrikes during the month, a high number given Mali's reliance on external support following the drawdown of French and UN peacekeeping forces in the country. Armed clashes were frequent, with 136 cases, while attacks numbered 64. The use of remote explosives in sixteen cases indicates the growing tactical sophistication of jihadist groups, particularly in central Mali. One mob violence incident was recorded, but overall, the violence remains largely military and insurgent-led. There were no reports of looting, protests, sexual violence, or peace efforts, and no territory was officially recorded as lost. However, the consistency of airstrikes and the number of fatalities point to a battlefield in motion.

Niger contributed 6% of the total regional deaths 118 people were killed.^[26] Although not often in the international spotlight, Niger's conflict profile has shifted dramatically in recent months. Armed clashes 53 and attacks 63 contributed to the majority of deaths, while two mob violence incidents show that instability is not just imported it is also emerging from within. Like its Sahelian neighbours, Niger is exposed to the pressures of regional jihadist networks, intercommunal rivalries, and a fragile state security system. There were no airstrikes, no group overtakes of territory, and no demonstrations indicating a more contained, but still intense and escalating, conflict environment. With no reported peace initiatives, the violence in Niger continues in a vacuum of political solutions.

[25] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

[26] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

Ghana, long considered a stable democracy in the region, recorded 28 deaths in March. The incidents included 14 armed clashes, 12 attacks, and two mob violence cases. While the number of incidents and deaths may seem modest compared to its neighbours, the presence of organised armed confrontations within Ghana's borders is a worrying development. Ghana shares borders with Burkina Faso and Togo, and the northern regions are increasingly vulnerable to extremist infiltration, arms trafficking, and political spillovers. Although there were no drone strikes, explosions, or protests recorded, the deaths signal a rise in violent tension that, if ignored, could escalate into a broader crisis.

Benin reported 19 deaths, most resulting from 14 attacks and two armed clashes.^[27] There were three cases of mob violence, and again, like many of its neighbours, there were no reported peace efforts or political interventions. Benin has become a vulnerable flank in the expanding Sahel conflict, with extremist groups from Burkina Faso reportedly operating near its northern borders. Though it currently faces a lower intensity of violence, the trend of fatalities, even in this lower range, suggests that conflict may be expanding southward.

In Liberia, three people were killed, all during mob violence incidents. Though the country did not report any clashes, attacks, or organised armed group activity, the presence of fatal mob actions highlights the fragility of Liberia's internal cohesion. The country continues to recover from civil war legacies, and the absence of formal conflict does not mean the threat of violence has disappeared. In Ivory Coast, three people were also killed in March, all from armed clashes. No further incidents were recorded, but like Liberia and Benin, its location and history make it vulnerable to the domino effects of regional instability.

Other countries like Guinea, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Cape Verde, Mauritania, and Togo reported no fatalities. At first glance, this may seem encouraging. However, the complete absence of data may reflect underreporting, weak conflict surveillance systems, or fear of reprisals. Given the porous borders and informal networks that operate in the region, these states cannot be considered immune from the wave of violence engulfing their neighbours.

Across the entire region, armed clashes were by far the deadliest form of violence, responsible for 983 fatalities, over 50% of the total. Attacks followed with 512 deaths.^[28] Air or drone strikes claimed 297 lives, showing the increasing role of aerial operations in the region's counterinsurgency strategies. Remote explosives killed 31 people, while mob violence led to 37 fatalities. Only six people were killed in violent demonstrations, and one person in a sexual violence incident.

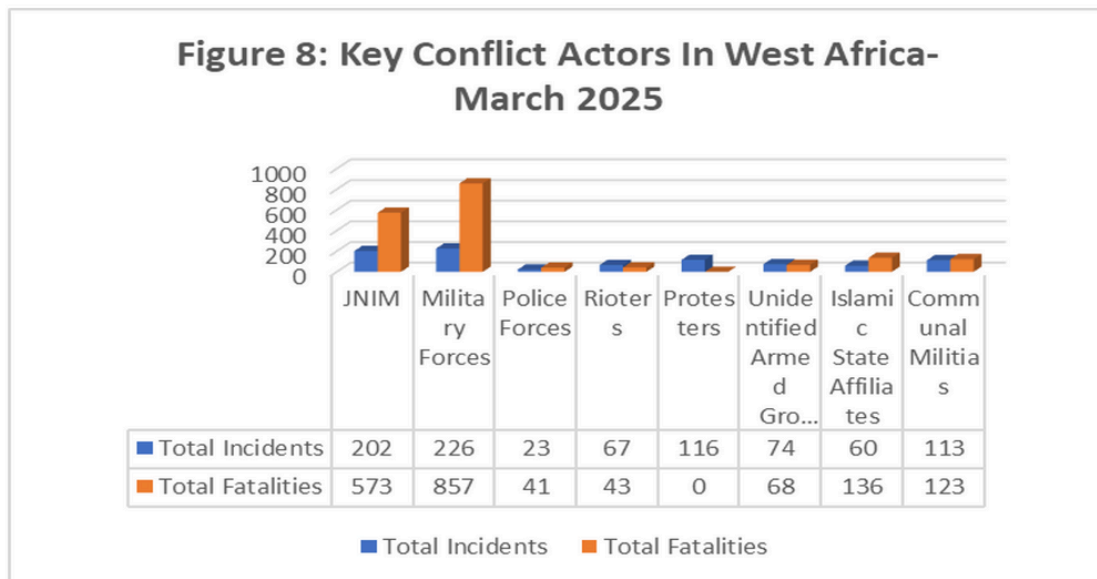
[27] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

[28] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

There were no deaths recorded from peaceful protests, abductions, or political negotiations. This silence is its own signal: violence is occurring without any effort at de-escalation, without accountability, and without meaningful dialogue.

This is no longer a regional crisis confined to remote areas. It is widespread, evolving, and increasingly normalised. If current trends persist, the region risks becoming a place where violence is not only common but expected. Every fatality in March 2025 was not just a human tragedy it was also a warning that the region is steadily drifting further from the prospect of peace.

Key Actors Driving Security Crises in West Africa (Conflict Types)



Source: ACLED, March 2025

March 2025 witnessed a continued deterioration in West Africa's security landscape, with 899 conflict incidents resulting in 1,944 fatalities. The crisis remains driven by a broad spectrum of actors from state forces and jihadist groups to communal militias and unidentified armed elements. While the number of fatalities marks an increase from the previous month, what is most striking is the distribution of deaths across these actors, underscoring the complex and layered nature of the region's security environment.

State military forces were once again the most lethal actors in the region, responsible for 857 deaths, or approximately 44.1% of all recorded fatalities in March. Nigeria's military forces led with 410 deaths, followed by Burkina Faso (284) and Mali (125).^[29] In these countries, the military's heavy deployment reflects continued pressure on state institutions to confront insurgent groups and armed militias. However, the persistently high death toll raises serious concerns regarding rules of engagement, proportional use of force, and civilian protection, particularly in contested zones across the Sahel.

Insurgent and jihadist groups continue to play a central role in the regional violence. Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) was responsible for 573 deaths, comprising 29.5% of total fatalities in March 2025.^[30]

[29] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

[30] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

JNIM's operations were largely concentrated in Burkina Faso (398 deaths) and Mali (144 deaths), where the group maintains deep entrenchment in rural zones, frequently outmanoeuvring state forces and exacting control over territory and communities. Their strategy, which combines high-impact assaults with ideological enforcement, further challenges fragile governance systems in the region.

Islamic State-affiliated groups, including ISWAP and ISIS-Greater Sahara, were responsible for 136 fatalities, or 7% of the monthly death toll. These deaths were most pronounced in Niger (80 deaths) and Nigeria (54 deaths).^[31] The Islamic State's operational footprint remains strategic, focusing on military convoys, border posts, and soft targets, reflecting a sustained ability to project force despite internal and external rivalries with other armed factions.

Communal militias were responsible for 123 deaths, mostly in Nigeria (106) and Ghana (10). These groups, often organised along ethnic or community lines, continue to exploit weak local governance and unresolved land or resource disputes. Their activities are increasingly marked by cycles of revenge attacks, civilian targeting, and in some cases, extrajudicial killings carried out under the guise of local defence.

The presence of unidentified armed groups accounted for 68 deaths, most notably in Nigeria (43 deaths) and Ghana (14 deaths). These actors, often operating in border areas or peripheral zones, present serious attribution challenges. Their emergence points to the fragmentation of violence, where non-affiliated or opportunistic groups pursue local agendas outside formal insurgent structures. The role of police forces in conflict-related fatalities was also notable, with 41 deaths recorded. Nigeria again led this category with 40 fatalities, indicating concerns around law enforcement conduct, crowd control, and lethal policing in response to civil disturbances and suspected criminal activity.

Meanwhile, protests were linked to 43 fatalities, largely in Nigeria (32 deaths) and Liberia (3 deaths).^[32] These incidents often emerged from public unrest, vigilante justice, and confrontations between protesters and state forces. While not the primary source of fatalities, riot-related violence underscores broader societal tensions and declining trust in institutional responses to grievances. It is important to note that no deaths were recorded from peaceful protests during this period. The absence of protest-linked fatalities may reflect either the limited occurrence of large-scale demonstrations or heightened fears of repression, particularly in countries where civic space is shrinking.

On a national level, Nigeria accounted for the highest fatality count (712 deaths, 36.6%), followed by Burkina Faso (682 deaths, 35%), and Mali (277 deaths, 14.2%).^[33]

[31] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

[32] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

[33] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/2025/03/07/africa-overview-march-2025/>

These three countries alone were responsible for over 85% of all recorded deaths in March, highlighting the entrenched nature of conflict within their borders. Other countries including Niger (117 deaths), Ghana (29 deaths), Benin (18 deaths), Liberia (3 deaths), and Ivory Coast (3 deaths) experienced varying degrees of actor-driven violence. Meanwhile, Cape Verde, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, and Togo recorded no fatalities, reflecting either relative stability or limitations in data reporting from these regions.

March's actor-specific fatality breakdown reaffirms that West Africa's security crisis is no longer confined to traditional insurgent warfare. It is a mosaic of militarised state responses, insurgent dominance, fragmented communal violence, and opportunistic attacks by actors without clear affiliation. While military campaigns remain central to national strategies, these alone have not stemmed the tide of violence.

Strategic Developments

Nigeria recorded notable strategic developments as federal and state authorities intensified efforts to address insurgency, militia activity, and political instability. Moreover, in the Northeast, seven Boko Haram fighters surrendered to the Multinational Joint Task Force in Borno, handing over weapons and supplies. Similarly, a militia commander in Katsina surrendered, released ten hostages, and submitted two AK-47 rifles. In addition, in the Southeast, 51 members of the Ekoli Edda militia laid down arms in Ebonyi State, where the government granted them amnesty^[34] and reintegration support, reflecting a growing emphasis on negotiated disarmament.

At the same time, security forces carried out targeted operations to neutralise threats and disrupt militant infrastructure. In Borno, troops defused multiple IEDs planted in Sambisa Forest following a clash with Boko Haram fighters. For instance, in Rivers State, police foiled an attempt to sabotage an oil pipeline, recovering explosives and arresting two suspects. Military operations in Sokoto led to the dismantling of a militia camp and the seizure of combat gear, while in Ondo, Amotekun operatives arrested 32 individuals linked to kidnapping syndicates.^[35]

On the political front, the federal government declared a state of emergency in Rivers State, suspending the governor for six months to address a prolonged standoff between the executive and legislature.^[36] This declaration marked a rare federal intervention in subnational governance and underscored growing political tensions. In this context, these developments reflect a strategic mix of military pressure, amnesty-driven demobilisation, and political intervention in Nigeria's ongoing efforts to stabilise conflict-affected regions.

Mali experienced intensified operations by both state and non-state actors, resulting in widespread civilian harm, property destruction, and strategic repositioning. FAMA and Wagner forces conducted numerous raids across Gao, Kidal, Menaka, and Tombouctou regions, often involving the burning of civilian infrastructure, looting of shops and livestock, and arbitrary arrests. Consequently, these actions contributed to the displacement of communities in areas like Fatakara and Sirabougou-Bozo, particularly among Fulani populations.

Meanwhile, JNIM adopted a dual strategy of coercion and local engagement. In addition, the group lifted embargoes in Boni and Lere and negotiated disarmament deals with communities in Tenenkou and Bankass.

[34] Daily Post: <https://daily.post.ng/2025/03/21/ebonyi-govt-grants-amnesty-to-51-ekoli-edda-youths-retrieves-50-firearms/>

[35] Zagazola: <https://zagazola.org/index.php/breaking-news/nigerian-armed-forces-sustain-momentum-in-counter-terrorism-and-security-operations-across-the-country>

[36] BBC: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdjyplx4nko>

At the same time, JNIM maintained checkpoints and carried out identity checks, reinforcing its governance model in contested areas. ISSP also escalated economic targeting, attacking transport routes, looting health centres, and destroying mining infrastructure, most notably in Tin Abana. Moreover, although eight FLA fighters surrendered in Timbuktu and an IED was defused in Aghilhek, these tactical gains were overshadowed by the rising toll on civilians and deepening mistrust toward state forces. The month revealed Mali's ongoing fragmentation, with civilians increasingly caught between predatory actors and contested authority.

The Burkinabe government intensified its efforts to reduce insecurity amid growing militant threats. The military conducted heightened security operations, notably intercepting two drones operated by JNIM, which were armed with improvised explosive devices (IEDs). The first drone was downed over Seguenega on March 18, and the second crashed in Songa on March 29, highlighting the increasing use of drone warfare by jihadist groups. In response, on March 10, Burkinabe security forces launched an operation targeting JNIM positions in Thiou, though details on the operation's success remain limited.

The government also responded to intensified militant actions against both civilian and state targets. For example, militant groups like JNIM and ISSP escalated their attacks, including a fire attack on Volunteer Defence Fighters (VDP) in Borguende on March 30. The government's response involved military operations and engaging local defence forces to counter these threats. Despite the persistent insecurity, the government focused on protecting both state and civilian interests, though the challenge of ongoing extortion, property destruction, and livestock theft continued to affect local communities.

Moreover, the government also made efforts to protect civilians affected by the conflict, organising military-escorted convoys to ensure the safety of displaced populations. In the Yagha region, Sebba residents were escorted to Dori as insecurity escalated, and the entire population of Watinoma in Boulgou fled following an attack on the area. In addition, these efforts aimed to mitigate the growing humanitarian crisis and provide some security for vulnerable communities amid the ongoing violence. Despite these measures, the widespread displacement and the continued militant activity underline the government's struggle to fully restore peace and stability.

The Nigerien government took significant steps to address the growing security challenges and consolidate control over national resources. One of the key developments was the enactment of the "Charter of the Refoundation" on March 26, which extended the military transition by five years and restructured the ruling council to strengthen governance.

Moreover, this was accompanied by the dissolution of all political parties and the release of several detainees as part of a national reconciliation initiative. These actions signalled a move towards a more centralised government, aiming to stabilise the country.

The Government of Benin undertook a notable security-related action, withdrawing military personnel from their year-long deployment in Founougo, Banikoara (Alibori region), and relocating them to the Point Triple military base at the intersection of the Benin, Burkina Faso, and Niger borders.^[37] This strategic redeployment suggests a reorientation toward strengthening border security in the volatile tri-border area, long a hotspot for cross-border militant activity and armed group infiltration. It reflects a growing emphasis on regional coordination and preemptive counter-insurgency measures.

In Niger Republic, the government moved to assert greater control over its oil sector. Authorities expelled directors of Chinese oil companies for alleged operational failures and introduced measures to boost state oversight.^[38] These included a review of the Niger-Benin pipeline construction costs and revisions to regulations to increase Nigerien participation in the sector. These steps aim to reduce foreign dependency and strengthen economic sovereignty, amid rising tensions with both regional and international partners.

On March 21, a deadly attack on a mosque in Fambita, Kokorou (Tillabéri region) left 44 people dead. The attack, attributed to Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP), prompted a strong military response. Between March 27 and 29, security forces successfully defused several improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Doundiel, Dyongore, and Niakatire, demonstrating heightened vigilance in the region. In line with this security drive, the military launched Operation Nalewa Dole on March 29 in the Diffa region, aimed at protecting oil infrastructure. This marked a shift in military priorities toward safeguarding critical national assets, particularly in light of the broader national effort to reclaim control over the oil industry.

Meanwhile, on March 22, Beninese police disrupted a citizenship training session organised by The Democrats, the party of former President Boni Yayi at its headquarters in Dassa-Zoumé. Citing lack of authorisation, authorities detained three party members for several hours. Although presented as a matter of public order, the incident was widely perceived as a move to curtail civic and political engagement ahead of the 2026 elections. It underscores the government's increasing reliance on security forces to monitor and control political activity, deepening the securitisation of Benin's political space.

[37]Global Upfront Newspaper: <https://globalupfront.com/2025/03/30/counter-terrorism-benin-republic-bolsters-defence-signs-security-cooperation-accord-with-u-s/>

[38]NovaNews:<https://www.agenzianova.com/en/news/niger-la-giunta-militare-espelle-dirigenti-delle-compagnie-petroliferi-cinesi-e-chiude-hotel-costruito-da-pechino/>

Conclusion

The March 2025 report reaffirms the entrenched nature of insecurity in West Africa, with Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Mali continuing to bear the brunt of violent conflict. Armed groups remain capable of mounting complex, high-impact operations, while state forces increasingly rely on airpower and militarised countermeasures with limited long-term effect. Emerging instability in coastal and previously stable countries such as Ghana and Benin signals the spread of violence beyond the Sahel core. Despite ongoing military responses, the structural causes of unrest, economic marginalisation, weak governance, and distrust in institutions remain unresolved. Without a shift toward coordinated, preventive, and inclusive strategies, the region risks further fragmentation and prolonged instability.

About CDD-West Africa

The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa) was established in 1997 as an independent, not-for-profit research, training, advocacy, and capacity-building organisation. Its mission is to drive democracy, security, and development in West Africa by bridging policymakers, civil society, and academia through research and strategic analysis.

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Please direct inquiries to:
Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa)
Research Department
16-20, A7 Street Mount Pleasant Estate (CITEC)
Federal Capital Territory (F.C.T) Abuja
research@cddwestafrica.org
cddabv@cddwestafrica.org
[@CDDwestafrica.org](https://www.CDDwestafrica.org)

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